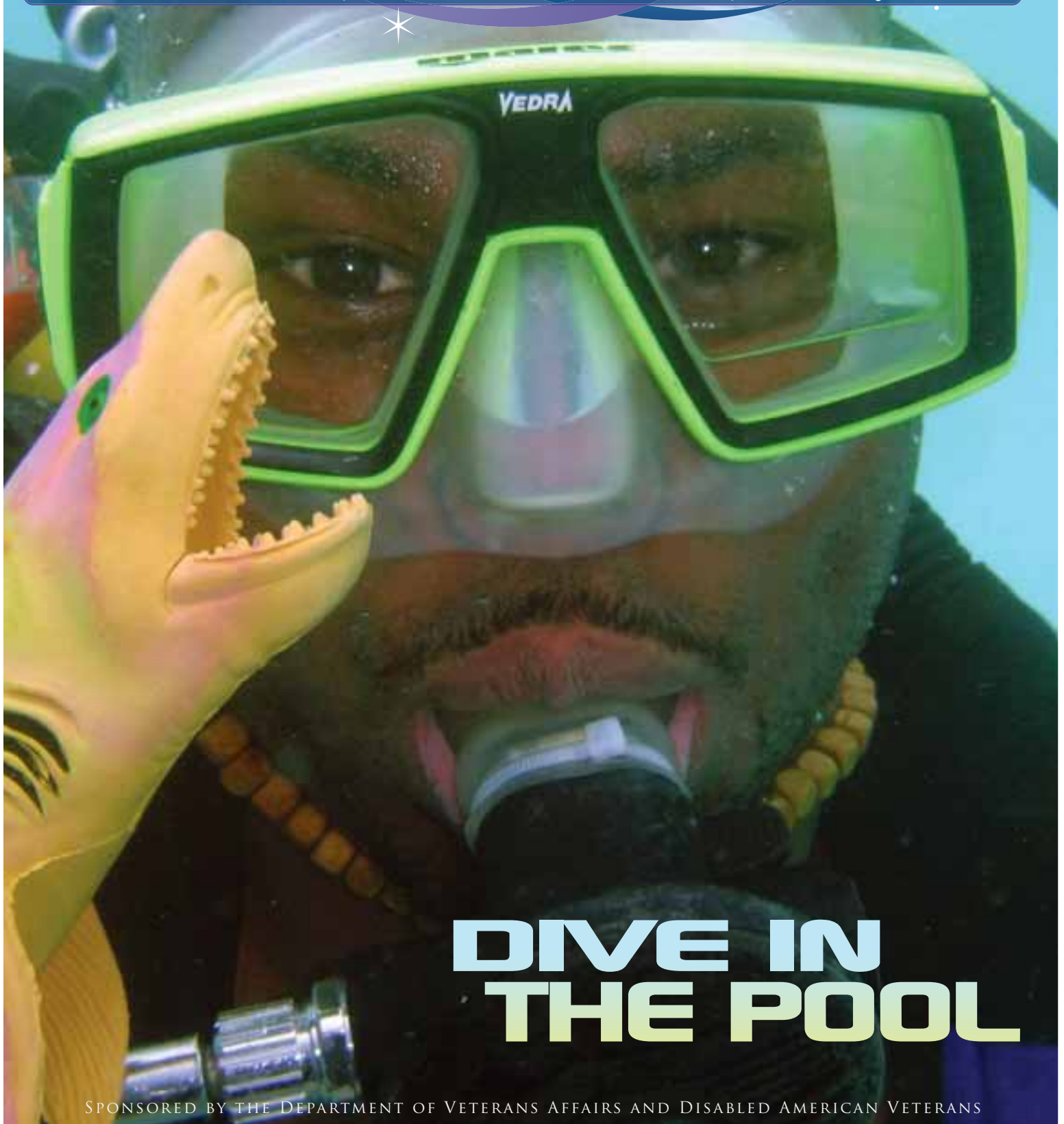


THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE 23RD NATIONAL DISABLED VETERANS WINTER SPORTS CLINIC

Ski Gram

THURSDAY EDITION • April 2, 2009

www.wintersportsclinic.va.gov



DIVE IN THE POOL

SPONSORED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

what are YOU saying?

Who was the most famous person you ever met?



Jim Baugh

Idaho Falls, Idaho
Army

"That's easy – Ingrid Bergman. She's beautiful. I met her in Kodiak, Alaska when Bob Hope used to come and entertain the troops."



Johnnie Baylark

Downers Grove, Ill.
Marine Corps

"Michael Jordan – I saw him play basketball at the Chicago Bulls Arena in Chicago right before he stopped playing. He's one of my fraternity brothers in Omega Psi Phi."



Tony Steiner

Lake Tahoe, Calif.
Army

"I met Robert Redford in Snowbird, Utah back in the early 80s. He was sitting between two bodyguards on a gondola. He's a great skier!"



Cindy Lions

Colorado Springs, Colo.
Army Reserves

"I met former President George Bush on November 24, 2003 at Butts Army Air Field in Ft. Carson, Colorado – just before he served Thanksgiving turkey to the troops in Iraq."

The Prosthetics Post

Here we are at another edition of the daily "Prosthetics Post" column in the Ski•Gram where we answer frequently asked prosthetics questions. Don't forget our Web site is always available for more information: www.prosthetics.va.gov

Now for our question of the day:

Dear Prosthetics Post,
I've been following the column all week and have a good question for you. I have to use a wheelchair now and have trouble getting around my own house. Any recommendations?

Sincerely,
Vet Needs House Help

Dear Vet Needs House Help,

Absolutely do we have a recommendation for you – the Home Improvement and Structural Alterations grant. This grant is a once-in-a-lifetime benefit provided to all medically entitled veterans for home alterations. It doesn't matter if you're service connected or not; it will adjust the amount of money provided. You can use this benefit to widen doors, modify bathrooms, install wooden ramps, lower cabinets, etc. So who qualifies? Any veteran determined to have a physical disability that prevents safe entry into or exit from the home or within the home. Check out the program at your local VA medical center.

Vote for the 2009 Clinic Awards

If you haven't done so already, please make sure to stop by the conference center lobby to vote for the 2009 Winter Sports Clinic awards.

These traditional awards have a long history at the Winter Sports Clinic that date all the way back to the first event in 1987. Taking the time to recognize some outstanding individuals by voting is greatly appreciated. You will also be helping make these special awards an exciting part of Friday night's closing ceremonies and the 23rd National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. If you've voted already, thank you!

It's a Wrap!

There are only two days left to share your story of service with the Veterans History Project (VHP). The VHP is a national effort to record your stories of service and sacrifice to make sure they live on for future generations.

Each 45-minute interview is recorded and sent to the Library of Congress. Your story then becomes part of our nation's official historical records.

Interviews take place today from 8:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. and tomorrow until noon in the Janss Auditorium, on the second floor of the conference center. If an interview is in progress, please leave your name, hotel name and room number for the interviewers. Remember to contact the interview team if you need to cancel your appointment.

Don't miss this final opportunity to make history!

VA's National Rehabilitation Special Events: What's Your Pleasure?

The possibilities are endless for veterans who participate in any of VA's six national rehabilitation special events. Through these innovative annual programs, sports, art and recreation become an integral part of rehabilitation, opening the doors to a whole world of new activities.

Now in its 23rd year, the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic has been held in Snowmass Village since 2000. Open to veterans with a wide range of disabilities including spinal cord injuries, amputations, visual impairments and traumatic brain injuries, the Clinic promotes rehabilitation by instructing participants in Alpine and Nordic skiing as well as other adaptive sports and activities such as rock climbing, snowmobiling, sled hockey and self defense, among others. Over the years, the Clinic has become a world leader in rehabilitation and the premier winter sports rehabilitation event for military veterans in the world.

Life begins at 55, at least it does for nearly 700 veterans who compete each year in the National Veterans Golden Age Games, the premier senior adaptive rehabilitation program in the U.S. It is the only national multi-event sports and recreational seniors' competition program designed to improve the quality of life for older veterans. One of the most progressive and adaptive rehabilitative senior sports programs in the world, it offers 14 different sports and recreational activities to participating veterans in such sports as bicycling, swimming, nine-ball and others. This year, the Golden Age Games are taking place in Birmingham, Ala., June 1-5, 2009.

The National Veterans Wheelchair Games, the largest annual wheelchair sports competition in the world, offers 17 different sports to veterans who use wheelchairs due to spinal cord injuries, amputations and neurological conditions. The Games promote rehabilitation through rigorous competition in such events as basketball and quad rugby. A special Kids Day program allows children with disabilities to meet the athletes and be introduced to wheelchair sports. While past

Games have produced national and world-class champions, the event also allows newly disabled veterans to gain sports skills and be exposed to other wheelchair athletes. The 2009 Games take place July 13-18, 2009 in Spokane, Wash.

VA's newest national program, the National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic, promotes rehabilitation of body and spirit by teaching summer sporting activities to newly injured veterans. The event offers such sports as surfing, sailing, track and field, kayaking and cycling. At its inaugural event last September, veterans with amputations, traumatic brain injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder and neurological disorders all benefited from the therapeutic environment of sun and sand. The second event takes place in San Diego, September 20-25, 2009. Surf's up!

Previously a local program, the National Veterans TEE Tournament is a newly adopted national event that provides legally blind and other disabled veterans an opportunity to develop new skills and improve self-esteem through adaptive golf, bowling, horseshoes and other activities. Each year, the Tournament uses a therapeutic format to promote rehabilitation, fellowship and camaraderie among the participants. Taking place at six golf courses in and around Coralville, Iowa, this year's event will be held September 6-11, 2009.

If you are more of an art lover than an athlete, the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival may be just what the doctor ordered. Each year, veterans from across the country enter local competitions in the categories of art, drama, dance, music and creative writing. Local gold medal winners compete nationally, and select artists are then invited to the national Festival for a week of art inspired events. It culminates in an awe-inspiring art exhibit and gala stage show performance. This year's Festival takes place in San Antonio, October 5-12, 2009.

Participating in any of these events can change your life forever. Visit <http://www1.va.gov/opa/speceven/> for more information about all of them.



The Show on the Snow!



Wasting Away in Margaritaville

Sitting in the Silvertree’s heated outdoor pool with Jimmy Buffet’s *Margaritaville* playing in the background, you would think you were on a tropical island. Think again. You’re still in Snowmass Village and the Winter Sports Clinic’s scuba class is in full swing. In a pool full of veterans enjoying the weightless feeling that comes with being in the water, the instructors are teaching basic scuba skills.

Bill White, a Marine Corps veteran from Wood Dale, Ill., is one of those energetic divers. If you ask him, he’ll proudly show off his new prosthetic with a wildly colorful tattoo design. During the year, White, a certified diver, teaches scuba to the disabled at “DiveHeart” in Donners Grove, Ill., and has taken some of his students to Cozumel, Mexico for picturesque dives.

One of White’s students, Bill Rogers, a Navy veteran from Ronan, Montana, is trying scuba for the first time. Having served in Diego Garcia, Roosevelt Roads and Corpus Christi, he wishes he had learned how to dive a long time ago. “The feeling is great – I love the weightless feeling,” he said. “It’s easy on my arthritis.”

Stephen Bruggeman of Lennox, S.D., is a Coast Guard vet who was in the pool on Tuesday practicing for the first time with his swimmer’s leg, one of his three specific use



Certified Scuba Diver Bill White of Wood Dale, Illi. proudly shows off his “tattooed” prosthetic leg.

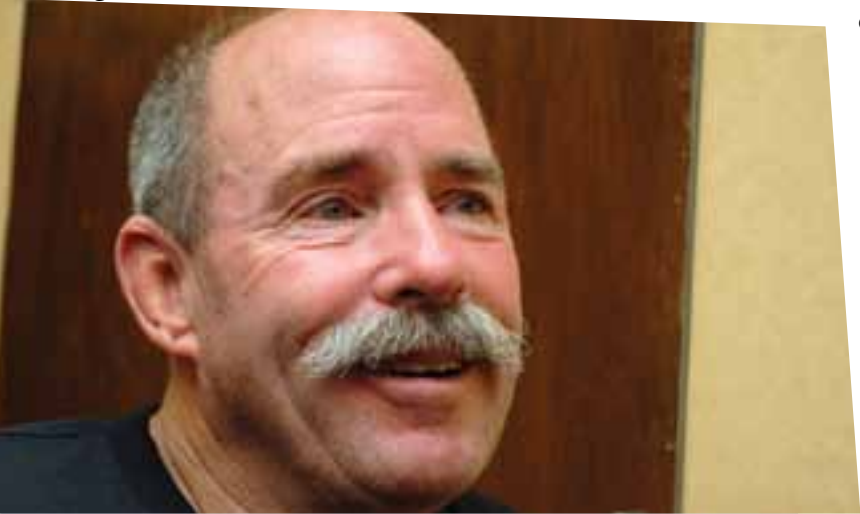
legs. For Bruggeman, the class will help get him ready for a scuba diving trip he’ll be taking this year to Costa Rica.

Scuba has been a popular activity at the Winter Sports Clinic for many years, and this year is clearly no exception. Even though it may not be your typical “winter” sport, the healing value of the water defies all seasons. Get into the pool and find out for yourself!

Never Missed a Clinic

Clint Hale of Ft. Walton Beach, Fla., has participated in every Winter Sports Clinic event since the program began, making this his 23rd year! An Air Force veteran, Hale says, “This is the best event I’ve ever attended. It instills confidence in you, and you get great support here – a real adrenalin rush.”

Once during his early years of skiing, he was headed downhill when a blizzard rolled in. He skied from one tree line to the other, to navigate his way through the blinding snow. When he reached the bottom, he was



Clint Hale of Ft. Walton Beach, Fla. has participated in every Winter Sports Clinic.

so proud of surviving that he just had to tell someone. He commented to another veteran at the bottom that he was glad he made it because he couldn’t see a thing. When the veteran gave a sympathetic, “Awww...” Hale realized he was talking to a blind skier. It gave him a new appreciation for the courage of all the other men and women who came to challenge themselves.

Hale credits his former recreation therapist, Judy Birch (Stutts), with encouraging him to get involved. He’s been coming ever since. He described the types of equipment used to ski in the beginning, before there were mono-skies or other adaptive equipment. They used an “Aurora” which was more like a kayak with picks instead of poles to use for turning. A technique called the “hockey stop” was used to stop – turning very quickly to come to a halt. He said it was also challenging to get on and off the lifts; it had to be done with helping hands and muscle power. He used the 4-track stand-up skis with outriggers for many years, but about four years ago started using the mono-ski.

Hale is here with the West Palm Beach team. He hopes that perhaps next year his wife, Eva, and 12-year old daughter, Gabrielle, might accompany him... to his 24th event!

After 38 Years Together, There’s Still Always a First Time

A triumph of faith, love and hope culminates on the mountain today when Ralph and Theresa Cummings commemorate their 38th wedding anniversary, Ralph’s renewed ability to walk, and his first successful attempt at skiing.

The couple first met when they were only 12 years old, but they proved inseparable from the seventh grade on no matter how many miles were between them.

“We’re soulmates,” Theresa beamed, thinking back over 38 years. “Even the night that Ralph got injured, I got terribly sick. I got anxious, I couldn’t breathe but I didn’t know why. By morning, I knew something had changed and I knew it was Ralph.”

What changed was Ralph’s brain. Under heavy enemy fire in Vietnam, Ralph had a rocket injury to his head only months after recovering from rocket injuries to his legs. The new wound was enough to send Ralph to Walter Reed Army Medical Center. When he arrived, Theresa rushed to his side.

Two years later, Ralph and Theresa were married, after weathering more than some couples see in a lifetime. Ralph steadily recovered and worked as a medical photographer in Mount Sinai Hospital in Baltimore. The two enjoyed boating, tennis and bowling and they stayed close to family. The stress of Ralph’s job, however, troubled his brain injury and he started having seizures. For medical reasons, Ralph decided to retire.

“It was tough,” Ralph said. “I’m the kind of guy that has to be doing something and I don’t take no for an answer, not even from Theresa. I had to do something.”

Ralph turned to sports and boating, upgrading the family boat to a cruiser taking long bike rides and playing tennis. Theresa worked, but took as much time as



Ralph and Theresa Cummings of Baltimore, Md., celebrate many milestones this week, one of them being their 38th anniversary.

she could to join her husband on various activities. Life hummed along smoothly until July 2007, when Ralph came down with Guillian-Barre Syndrome, a neurological disease that paralyzed him.

“I was brought real low. I couldn’t even close my fingers around a pen,” Ralph remembers. “I couldn’t walk, couldn’t talk right, couldn’t even keep food in my mouth.”

Again, Theresa was there to love and cherish her husband as she had vowed to do decades before.

“I look back at that year and honestly don’t know where I got the energy,” Theresa said. “God kept me strong. I had to keep working and caring for my husband. God gave me the strength to work through it.”

With that faith and support, Ralph was determined to recuperate and went to his therapy regularly. Through long days and setbacks, Ralph never gave up. Theresa wouldn’t allow it.

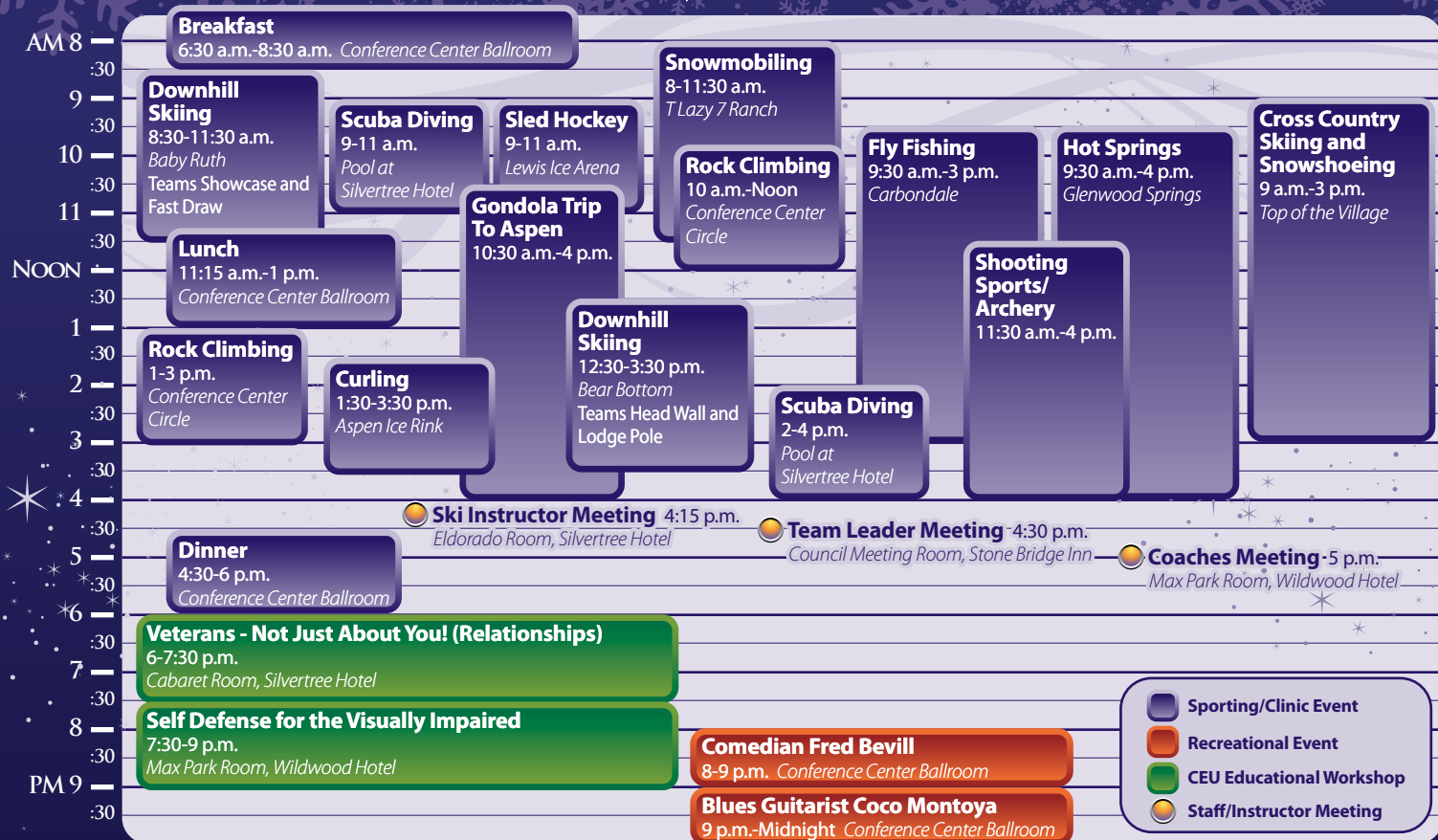
On Tuesday, one month after Ralph relearned to walk after a year of intense physical therapy, he skied for the first time in his life, not yet able to smile, but with tears of joy in his eyes. On Wednesday, Ralph went snowmobiling with Theresa in tow, watching in amazement at how far her husband, and their marriage had come.

“I was scared for him to come here,” Theresa said. “I mean, he’d just started walking and he comes home telling me he wants to ski. I know Ralph, and when he sets his mind to something there’s no stopping him, so I might as well go along. Now that I’m here though, I’m so glad we came. I get to see all of the veterans dealing with disabilities and being so active and alive here. It’s made us both so happy to see this and be around this. It’s been a wonderful anniversary.”



Ralph Cummings skis for the very first time this Tuesday.

SCHEDULE FOR THURSDAY, APRIL 2



The Bulletin

Wheelchair and Prosthetics Repair

Located at the Host Room in the Conference Center.

Hours are:

6:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.
11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
4 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

In between these hours please call (970) 689-0049 for wheelchair assistance, and (970) 430-2007 for prosthetics needs. Please do not call after 6 p.m. unless it is an emergency.

Medical Room

For emergencies dial 911

Phone is (970) 923-8330. The room is located in the Bedford A conference room, across the street from the Mountain Chalet Hotel. Stairway access from the mall is next to Christy Sports. Wheelchair access is by the elevator at the far end of the mall above the bus terminal.

Transport: Van transport is available from the Silvertree Hotel to the medical room in the front of the hotel, or by calling the medical room.

After hours: Call the medical room for recorded instructions on how to contact the "on call" medical provider. If unsuccessful, call the hotel operator.

Massage

Complimentary massage is located in the Elbert room in the Silvertree Hotel. Please call (970) 980-7772 from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily to schedule an appointment. Call now. There are still spaces available!

Transportation Schedule

Event	Load	Depart
Snowmobiling		
First Trip	6:45 a.m.	7:15 a.m.
Second Trip	9 a.m.	9:30 a.m.
<i>Please make sure to load at your correct, scheduled time.</i>		
Sled Hockey	7:45 a.m.	8:15 a.m.
Fly Fishing	8 a.m.	8:15 a.m.
Cross Country Skiing		
First Trip	8:20 a.m.	8:45 a.m.
Second Trip	1 p.m.	1:30 p.m.
<i>Buses will run up and down the mountain throughout the day. The 1 p.m. bus will also pick up any participants from the first trip who wish to return to the Conference Center. All remaining participants will be picked up at 3 p.m.</i>		
Hot Springs	9:30 a.m.	10 a.m.
Trapshooting	10 a.m.	10:30 a.m.
Aspen Gondola	10 a.m.	10:30 a.m.
Curling	12:45 p.m.	1 p.m.

WEATHER

TODAY

High: **40°**

Low: **24°**

TOMORROW

High: **43°**

Low: **28°**



Clouds with
Rain & Snow
Mix



Clouds with
Rain & Snow
Mix